

POWELL, COLIN L.: Files, 1986-1989 – REAGAN LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

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POWELL, COLIN L: Files 1986-1989

National Security Council: Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, 1986-1987; Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, 1987-1989.

Biography

Colin Luther Powell was born in the Harlem section of New York City on April 5, 1937. His parents were Jamaican immigrants who worked in the garment industry. Powell grew up primarily in New York's South Bronx neighborhoods. He attended City College of New York, where he enjoyed success in the Reserve Officers Training Corps (ROTC) program while earning a bachelor's degree in geology. Upon graduating in 1958, he entered the Army as a second lieutenant, and served two years in West Germany. In 1963, he went to Vietnam for a one-year assignment as a military advisor. He then returned to the U.S., serving at Ft. Benning, Georgia and Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas.

Powell rose steadily through the Army ranks, serving in various military and civilian posts, and taking on more education. He graduated from US Army Command College in 1968. He returned to Vietnam in 1969-70, and helped in the investigation of the My Lai massacre that had been carried out by U.S. troops. He then enrolled at George Washington University and earned an M.B.A. degree. In 1972 he won a White House fellowship position in OMB, where his duties included assisting OMB Director Caspar Weinberger and Weinberger's assistant Frank Carlucci. In September 1973 he returned to active duty, with postings in South Korea and Fort Campbell, Kentucky. After a year attending the National War College, he was given command of the Second Brigade of the 101st Airborne Division at Fort Campbell. During the Carter Administration, he returned to Washington, and served in the Department of Energy and Department of Defense.

Powell again resumed active duty in June 1981, with postings at Ft. Leavenworth and Ft. Carson, CO. He returned to the Defense Department in 1983, serving as the senior military advisor to Secretary of Defense Weinberger. In 1986, he left this position to become commander of the Army's V Corps in Europe.

Lieutenant General Powell joined the NSC staff in December 1986 as the Deputy Assistant to the President. He served as the chief assistant to Mr. Carlucci, who had been named National Security Advisor in the wake of the Iran-Contra affair. In June, Powell gave a deposition about the Defense Department's alleged role in Iran-Contra during the time that he had served under Secretary Weinberger. However, Powell was never implicated in any wrongdoing. He succeeded Carlucci as National Security Advisor in November 1987, and held this position until the end of

the Reagan Administration. During Powell's time in the NSC, he advised Carlucci, President Reagan, and others in the Administration on all areas of foreign policy and arms control. He coordinated the advice given to Reagan for the summit meetings with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev. He was also heavily involved in the Administration's efforts in Central America.

In April 1989 Powell received a promotion to General. In October, President George Bush named him Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, making him the first African American and youngest person to hold this position. Powell gained public recognition during the Persian Gulf War of 1990-91. He became associated with the "Powell Doctrine," under which military action should be taken only when there are clear objectives, a plausible exit strategy, and other well-delineated factors.

Powell opposed President Clinton's initial idea of allowing gays to serve openly in the military, but supported the "don't ask, don't tell" policy that was implemented as a compromise. In September 1993 he resigned as Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and retired from the Army. The following year, he joined former President Carter and Senator Sam Nunn on a peacekeeping expedition to Haiti, which resulted in a peaceful transition from military to civilian rule in that country. In 1995 he published his autobiography, *An American Journey*. Many thought that he would be a candidate for President in 1996, but he chose not to run. However, he did give a televised prime-time speech at the Republican National Convention.

Powell was the first African-American Secretary of State and served from 2001 to 2004, under President George W. Bush. He supported Bush's call for war against Iraq, appearing before the United Nations Security Council in 2003 to present evidence of Iraqi "weapons of mass destruction" (WMD). In September 2004, he testified before Congress that the intelligence he used in his U.N. presentation was "wrong," and it was actually unlikely that Iraq had WMD stockpiles. In November 2004 Powell announced his resignation.

After stepping down from his position as Secretary of State Powell transitioned to the private sector where he founded and is the Chairman Emeritus of America's Promise Alliance, an organization formed to help at-risk children. Powell serves on the board of directors on the Council on Foreign Relations, the Eisenhower Fellowship Program, the Smithsonian Institute's National Museum of African American History and Culture, the Executive Leadership Cabinet of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial, and is the Honorary Chair of the Colin L. Powell School for Civic & Global Leadership at the City College of New York.

His military awards include the Defense Distinguished Service Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit with Oak Leaf Cluster, Soldiers Medal, Bronze Star Medal, Air Medal, Joint Service commendation Medal, Army Commendation Medal with two Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Purple Heart. General Powell received the Secretary of Energy Distinguished Service Medal in 1979.

In 2008, Powell crossed party lines to endorse Barack Obama for President. In 2010 he announced that he had changed his position on gays in the US military, and supported them serving openly in the armed forces.

Scope and Content

The records in this collection pertain to Colin Powell's role as Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, and Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs. Included in this collection are notes from the President's daily national security briefings Powell took when he served as Deputy Assistant, and notes taken by John Negroponte (Deputy Assistant under Powell). The collection also includes correspondence, schedules of the daily activities of the President, Vice President, and Mr. Powell, as well as photos of Mr. Powell at the White House.

The collection is arranged into two series: SERIES I: Subject File and SERIES II: National Security Briefings.

SERIES DESCRIPTIONS

SERIES I: SUBJECT FILE, 1987-1989 (3.6 l. ft., RAC Boxes 1-4)

This series consists of material relating to the daily schedules of President Reagan, the Vice President, and Mr. Powell. The chronological files include speech drafts, cables, and memoranda between Powell and NSC staff members and other government officials, as well as private citizens, and foreign government officials. Topics covered in the chronological files include the Iran-Iraq war, arms control, terrorists, Central America, anti-apartheid statutes, and summits with Mikhail Gorbachev. Also included in this series are meeting notes between President Reagan, Secretary George Shultz, and Mr. Powell which include topics such as Afghanistan, arms control, and the Middle East. There are also copies of official National Security Council photographs which include Mr. Powell with various staff members.

SERIES II: NATIONAL SECURITY BRIEFINGS, 1987-1989 (.4 l. ft., RAC Box 5)

This series consists of material relating to daily national security briefings President Reagan received from his national security advisors. Included are notes Mr. Powell took during the briefings when he served as Deputy Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, as well as notes from John Negroponte who replaced Powell in the same position.

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